

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus for providing a contract authority, comprising:

-- a network;

5 --a contract authority for assigning a unique identifier to each negotiation;

--a multivariate negotiations engine system including storage space and negotiations software, the multivariate negotiations engine system being connected to the network;

--a destination terminal connected to the network, the destination terminal including software for sending and receiving terms along a communications path over the network which flows through the multivariate negotiations engine system;

--an initiating terminal connected to the network, the initiating terminal including software for sending and receiving terms along a communications path over the network which flows through the multivariate negotiations engine system, during iterative processing the multivariate negotiations engine system recognizing the destination terminal and the initiating terminal as negotiators and designating one of them a deciding entity, such multivariate negotiations engine system further storing in the storage space the terms each terminal proposes, and sending terms to the indicated terminal until a set of terms is agreed upon by the deciding entity.